

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of preparing a negative electrode for a rechargeable lithium battery, comprising:

5 vacuum-drying a negative electrode precursor, the negative electrode precursor comprising a negative active material and an aqueous binder.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 80 to 200°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 90 to 150°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

10 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the negative electrode is prepared by coating a negative active material composition on a current collector, the negative active material composition comprising the negative active material and the aqueous binder.

15 5. A method of fabricating a rechargeable lithium battery comprising: assembling a negative electrode, a positive electrode, and an electrolyte to form a battery precursor; and

vacuum-drying the battery precursor.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature of 100°C or less.

20 7. The method of claim 5, wherein the negative electrode is prepared by vacuum-drying a negative electrode precursor including a negative active material and an aqueous binder.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 80 to 200°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

25 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the vacuum-drying is performed at a temperature from 90 to 150°C under a pressure of 10 torr or less for 1 to 72 hours.

10. A rechargeable lithium battery in which a total amount of gas is generated gas during initial charging, wherein the gas generated has a CO content of 30 volume % or less.

30 11. The rechargeable lithium battery of claim 10, wherein the gas generated has a H₂ content of 0.2 volume % or less.